

Americans overwhelmingly agree that our current health care system was due for reform. With tens of millions of uninsured residents, the costs of the system have skyrocketed – affecting business development, fiscal stability, and individual health and prosperity. The health reform law signed into law by President Obama is a solid—and long overdue—step in the right direction.

Reform Supports Small Business and Job Growth

Detractors of this health care legislation emphatically state that they don't want to pay for the 32 million Americans who currently do not have health care. But in fact we already are paying for them. Each time these uninsured individuals go to the hospital – often to the emergency room, which is the most expensive form of care - and do not pay for that care, that cost burden is shifted to those Americans who do have health insurance.

This is one reason why so many small businesses have seen massive increases in their health care premiums. The previous health care system placed an excessive burden on these employers – a burden that restricts economic development and job growth. In fact, in the past five years, small businesses have seen an average 129 percent increase in their health care costs. Under the new legislation, Congress has provided incentives for these overburdened small businesses and created more affordable coverage options. By utilizing a state-based health care marketplace that will be created in a few years, these small businesses will be able to join forces with other small businesses to increase buying power by decreasing costs. Additionally, small businesses that employ 50 or fewer employees – 96 percent of small businesses in America – will face no mandate to provide services and face no penalty for not doing so. And those businesses that employ 25 or fewer employees will receive a tax credit of up to 35 percent for providing insurance. Indeed, the Business Roundtable (an association of CEOs of leading American corporations) has stated that increased competition for health insurance will save businesses \$3,000 per employee; savings that can be redirected to business growth and job creation.

Reform Makes Financial Sense

According to the Congressional Budget Office – a neutral, non-partisan federal agency – reform legislation will reduce the federal deficit by \$138 billion over ten years and by another \$1.2 trillion in the following decade. It is no surprise that our current health care system wastes money. And by addressing some fiscal abuses that can occur in programs like Medicare, our nation will save at least \$50 billion per year; funds which can then be plowed back into the health care system.

Except for a 0.9 percent tax on couples making over \$250,000 per year, there will be no change to the cost of health care for American families. In fact, families earning under \$90,000 will receive a subsidy to assist with the cost of insurance, and the Congressional Budget Office actually projects that reform will lower premiums slightly for group health plans and reduce premiums up to 20 percent for individuals purchasing their own insurance through the exchange.

Reform Shifts Focus from Management to Prevention

One of the greatest achievements of the health care reform legislation is the shift of emphasis from disease management to prevention. Instead of waiting for people to get sick and then spending exorbitant sums of money to address the problem, this new system will emphasize the prevention of illness, or the management of that illness from its onset.

We can all agree that it makes financial sense to attack disease on the front end through encouraging healthy choices and preventative care, rather than waiting for serious illness to strike and increase the cost burden for all.

Bottom line, this is a bill that reflects principles found on both sides of the aisle. Members of Congress debated the new health care reform law for 14 months. Senate Democrats incorporated approximately 150 Republican amendments into the final bill. And according to a recent USA Today/Gallup Poll, a majority of Americans approve of this legislation and support the various components included in the bill.

Far from being a government takeover, health care reform is a well-deserved bailout for millions of middle-class, working Americans struggling to maintain affordable health insurance and for businesses trying to cope with the rising cost of benefits for their workers. We have a moral obligation to protect, empower, and improve the lives of our citizens. This legislation puts the health and well-being of the American people over the profits of insurance conglomerates, and I am proud to have supported it.

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